SPECIAL HOLIDAY ISSUE

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RETURNING TO PLAY

AFTER A COVID DELAY

Everything you need to know about a healthy restart

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On March 11, 2020, I watched the world become canceled as the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the COVID-19 outbreak had, indeed, become a global pandemic. Very quickly, governments closed schools and shut down businesses and travel bans went into effect, forcing us to stay home and limiting our social and physical interactions.

While gyms and golf courses remained closed, our society shifted its focus onto more important things like binge-watching TV shows on Netflix and eating out of boredom. At first, staying home was a luxury, but as the infection rate increased, so did our time indoors, keeping us away from the greens for much longer than expected. As predicted, my clinic began receiving an exceedingly large volume of callers, all of whom shared a common problem—back pain.

Alarming as it was, this came as no surprise to me, but I knew this also meant bad news for golfers who would inevitably return to the game in less-than-ideal physical condition. However, it is important to note that this return to sport does not only happen to golfers post-COVID; it also applies to most situations where there is a period of physical inactivity both on and off the course, and it is especially crucial to those planning to return after surgery or injury.

By now, you're probably asking yourself a myriad of questions, such as how to safely return to play, what to expect in your game as you return, and how to better prepare yourself for next time, should this happen again. My best advice on this is to start taking control of what you want to happen by answering your own questions first. This will not only help you get where you need to go, but it will also help you build up the parts of your mental capacity that link your emotions to your desires and how to achieve them best.

To do this, think back to your initial question and create a mental scenario in which you will begin to cross-examine yourself by asking productive questions. Start off by asking yourself how you feel toward the question at hand, then follow up with the question of why you think you feel the way you do toward this particular question. If any question regarding physical skill breeds fear or self-doubt, then an underlying cause likely needs attention.

Now that you've answered the questions and concluded the need for further assistance, it's time to take action. As you begin, it's important that you avoid cutting corners by doing the necessary research. This means you need to find the right person with the best solution to your problem, which is not your golf instructor but a licensed physical therapist, specifically one who specializes in golf rehab and performance. To find us, go online to The Titleist Performance Institute's (TPI) website, where you can access a directory that will tell you if there are any TPI-certified professionals in your area. **GT**